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ART. VII. — CRITICAL NOTICES.

1. — *A Dictionary of English Etymology.* By HENSLEIGH WEDGWOOD, late Fellow of Christ College, Cambridge. Second edition, thoroughly revised and enlarged. With an Introduction on the Origin of Language. London. 1872. 8vo.

THE first edition of this work was published in three volumes, which followed one another at intervals of three years, beginning in 1859.* Its first volume was reproduced in this country (New York, 1862), edited and enriched with notes by Mr. G. P. Marsh; what caused the discontinuance of the American edition has not, so far as we know, transpired. It is now brought out anew, in a single stout and handsome volume of 744 pages (besides the Introduction), and its publishers are urging it upon the attention of a larger public than that to which it originally addressed itself. By its inclusion, too, of the Romanic part of our language, which, on principle, was for the most part left untouched before, it now challenges a wider circulation and more general use.

The title, "Dictionary of English Etymology," is a very attractive one. The study of our language, as well as of language in general, has been of late absorbing to itself so much more and more enlightened interest than ever before, and that interest has begun to spread so far beyond the class of scholars proper, that a real need is felt of a good etymological discussion of the English vocabulary. Both the European languages with which we are most familiar possess such etymological hand-books: in French, there are the works of Scheler and Brachet, besides the elaborate and admirable treatment of etymologies in the magnificent thesaurus of Littré; in German, Weigand's edition of Schmitthener is the best and most useful authority, though constructed on a too narrow plan, and marred by some pervading faults. In English, all the older authorities, like Richardson and Webster (the latter in his own editions and those of his continuers, until the last), are simply to be thrown away, as rubbish or worse; nor is the latest Worcester very much better; whatever of good there may be in it, it is on the whole untrustworthy, liable to mislead as often as it guides aright. In the last edition of Webster, however, is included the best body of brief English etymologies, by Dr. Mahn of Berlin, that has ever been put together; it is the one thoroughly and consistently scholarlike element

* The concluding part of the third volume is in separate covers, and came forth, doubtless, somewhat later than the rest; but it is undated.

in that queer compound of very good, very bad, and all the intermediate qualities which now goes by the name of Webster, — the saving feature of the work. But although there is thus a fair authority for an English student to appeal to when a question arises, we crave, none the less, a work which shall be characterized by greater fulness of treatment, which shall discuss doubtful points, explain peculiar changes of form and transfers of use, and give illustrative quotations.

Whoever, now, shall take up Mr. Wedgwood's volume with the expectation of finding in it a reasonable satisfaction of these natural desires, will meet with disappointment. The work was not produced exclusively or especially to answer the practical needs of a student of English, as being constructed, to this end, upon a carefully drawn and consistent plan, governed by the best established philological principles, with industrious and exhaustive use of the soundest authorities. Its fundamental purpose was a much narrower one. Its author is a partisan of the onomatopoeic, or mimetic, or imitative theory of the origin of language. And he is one of those eager partisans who think it incumbent upon them, not merely to show that there is no other theory which accounts for the facts in accordance with the accepted principles of science, but also to prove a good part of the vocabulary of modern tongues directly and traceably derived from onomatopoeic roots. If the theory had not had so much of this sort of advocacy, it would certainly stand at present higher in the estimation of scholars than it actually does; the imputation of unsoundness is apt to be carried over from the examples to the arguments they support. And the dominant idea in Mr. Wedgwood's book is the collection of a body of examples to prove onomatopœia in English words. This is the line of investigation which he especially enjoys; in which he, as it were, revels. The result is such as might be expected: he often bores his readers, generally excites their distrust, and in numberless cases disappoints them of what they hoped to find. His long articles are wont to be those in which he chases the semblance of some word which our ears have never heard, but which offers a temptingly mimetic uncertainty and diversity of form, through a whole series of tongues, near and far, related and unrelated, bringing together a bewildering array of curious material, off some point of which he jumps at an asserted onomatopœia. Instances of this sort abound everywhere: *feaze*, 'whip,' is one; and *fumble*, and *firk*, and *frump*, and *gare*, and so on (we have chanced to fumble especially in the neighborhood of the *f*'s). A good share of the words beginning with *fl*, as *flat*, *flawn*, *fleck*, represent ultimately the sound made by throwing something soft, or hard, or liquid, down upon the ground. *Dam*, after a persistent hunt, has its root discovered in the

Swedish *tapp*, onomatopœia for "a bunch of something," such as might be used to stop an orifice; *dead* and *deaf*, which the author declares it impossible to separate from one another, go back to the same notion of "stopping an orifice" (we would volunteer to suggest here, as corroborative evidence, the well-known lines about "Imperial Cæsar, dead," etc., which seem to have had a deeper meaning in them than their author knew); and when we get to *dock*, the same idea of a "bunch" answering the purpose of a bung is still at the basis. Now it is doubtless true that very queer changes of meaning are to be found in the processes of linguistic growth and change, and that we are never justified in rejecting a derivation because it strikes us at first sight as absurd; still, an author may offer us such an over-supply of strange transfers among his etymologies that we come to distrust his historical sense and critical judgment, and to regard his identifications with incredulity. And Mr. Wedgwood succeeds, in our view, in bringing his readers to this frame of mind, in getting them where all shade of authority vanishes from his statements, and they crave to see what others have said upon any point in question before they form an opinion about it. There is a striking contrast in this respect between him and the American re-editor of his first volume. A refreshing air of sound sense hangs about Mr. Marsh's notes; one sees that he has read much and weighed carefully, that he understands something of the scope of evidence, and stops short of a conclusion which he suspects and craves, if he cannot quite reach it. Mr. Wedgwood's readings appear to have been much more among dictionaries and vocabularies than in the Old English literature. In their own direction, however, they have been not only wide, but a good deal wider than was safe or profitable. Finnish and Lappish are among the sources to which we are referred for explanations of English words. This, indeed, is an old habit of our author's, and has always been one of his weakest points. That the languages mentioned are absolutely known to be of another family than that to which English belongs, and that they therefore have no more right to be used directly in comparisons of English words than Congo or Pawnee, is of small account to him. The fact that the London Philological Society have chosen such a man to be their principal etymological authority in the preparation of the great English dictionary which they have long had in hand has gone far to reconcile us to the delay in its preparation; we have hoped that there might come forward to take the management of it a new generation of English etymologists, trained in a more thorough school and guided by sounder principles. Of course, Grimm's law of the correspondence of mutes in our family is quietly ignored; we have *fist* and Latin *fustis* compared, and *fool*

and *fallere*, and *for* and *foris*, and so on ; while *dare* (*durst*) and *trust* are forced into uncomfortable connection. We may sum up in a word by saying that Mr. Wedgwood is at the mercy of every chance resemblance that offers itself, lacking either the ability or the disposition to test it by the established rules of etymological evidence, or by any sound rule, in order to determine whether it be accidental or historical. With Celtic comparisons he is more sparing than might have been expected, and we are grateful to him accordingly ; but our gratitude does not go so far as to lead us to accept as valuable the greater part of what he actually gives.

We have no right to look for well-considered and scholarly method in a work originated and executed as this has been. According to the proper meaning of the title, a "Dictionary of English Etymology" ought to contain such a selection of English words as should both explain and commend itself at every step ; and under each word should be given first of all the word of the older language — Anglo-Saxon, French, Latin, or other — from which it directly comes (along with its intermediate forms, orthoepical and orthographical, if such there be, in the earlier English dialects), and then the various ancestral and collateral words, well distinguished from one another, back to the ultimate root, if that can be reached. Further, words that are in their whole substance descendants from older words should be described differently from those which come from ancient roots or bases by recent addition of endings. And the chronology of every change should be determined, so far as is possible. This is by no means Mr. Wedgwood's way of doing things. For example, under words of Anglo-Saxon descent, in at least half the cases he either omits the Anglo-Saxon equivalent altogether, or scatters it in just where his fancy suggests, among Old Norse and Dutch and Frisian, if not even Celtic and Finnish ; so that to an incautious consultor he would give the impression that we get our vocabulary directly from a highly piquant variety of sources. On the Romanic side the case is not quite so bad, because there is not so much room to go astray. Attention is mainly limited to the root words, derivatives being passed unnoticed ; this, to be sure, in a majority of instances has its good reason ; yet there are a host of derivatives which have a date and occasion of their own, a private history full of interest : take as an example *selfish*, which has been shown to come from a Puritan source, and to have won its way to general use after the failure of several other attempts, which might in advance have been deemed quite as likely to prove successful, at the expression of its meaning. Information of this character (which constitutes a chief part of the charm of Trench's volumes) would be very much in place in a

work like Mr. Wedgwood's; it was to be one of the valuable results of the lexicographical labors of the Philological Society; and we are rather discouraged at finding that it attracts no attention from the society's chief etymologist.

If we were better satisfied with the general plan and execution of this work, we might be tempted to enter with some detail into the examination and emendation of its etymologies; as things are, we do not care to take the time and trouble; our readers can already form a sufficiently enlightened judgment upon it. It is not what it seems to promise to be; every special student of English etymology, perhaps, will wish to have it at hand for consultation, although without too confident anticipation of valuable aid to be obtained from it; but as a manual of word-histories for the use of the general public it cannot be at all recommended; it has no claim to other than a very limited circulation; Mahn, in spite of his brevity, is greatly to be preferred.

It might seem strange, at first sight, to find an extended treatise (69 pages) on the Origin of Language prefixed to an etymological dictionary of English; but after the explanations we have given, it will be seen that the apparent Introduction is the real occasion of the whole work, the principal discussion, to which the rest stands in the relation of practical application. In the first edition it was, by comparison, a sketch only. But about the time that edition was completed, Mr. Wedgwood wrote out his ideas upon the subject in a fuller and more systematic form, and put them forth in a little volume (*On the Origin of Language*, London, 1866, pp. 165, 16mo). Of that volume, now, the present Introduction is a somewhat amplified and rearranged reprint. Doubtless there was no impropriety in its author's reproducing it after this fashion; but, not less certainly, he ought to have frankly stated what it was; so far as we have discovered, he does not let fall so much as a hint that it had ever seen the light before. As regards the treatise itself, it is with sincere pleasure that we are able to speak in almost unqualified praise of it, after finding fault with so many things in the dictionary. The discussion is an exceedingly able and acute one, unexceptionably temperate in tone, cogent in argument, and generally sound in illustration; of course, some of its examples admit of being questioned and set aside, but there is no more error of this kind than the best and most careful investigator might fall into. It is in the form especially of a reply to Max Müller's caricature and attempted refutation of what he is pleased to style the "bow-wow" and "pooh-pooh" theories, in the first series of his "Lectures on Language"; and its spirit and method contrast very favorably with those of the great foreigner who, having set up his "German workshop" on

English soil, is now suffered nearly to monopolize the manufacture of English opinion on all the subjects with which he deals. Upon the particular point of the value of the imitative element in the first construction of language, no other treatise has come under our notice that is anything like so good as Mr. Wedgwood's, and Müller and his school may safely be challenged to meet and answer its arguments. There is, to be sure, a deeper question underlying this of specific theories respecting the origin of language, — namely, the relation of language itself to thought, the nature of the aid it furnishes to the operations of the mind, the character of the inducement that called it forth and that still brings about its increase. A radical, though often unspoken and unconscious difference upon these points prevents those who discuss the general subject from getting upon common ground and appreciating one another's arguments; in their settlement is involved the acceptance or rejection of that of the imitative theory.

One oversight Mr. Wedgwood commits in his reply to Müller; he argues against the theory of phonetic types, produced in the mind by the impact of an idea after a fashion analogous with the ringing of a bell on being struck, as if it were still Müller's, not noticing that in the last edition of his *Lectures* this author steps out from under the burden of it, leaving it to rest upon the shoulders of those who had taken it up on his supposed authority.

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2. — *The Histories of Livy. Books I, XXI, and XXII. With Extracts from other Books.* Edited and annotated by THOMAS CHASE, M. A., Professor of Philology in Haverford College, etc. Philadelphia: Eldredge and Brother. 1872. pp. 364.

MR. CHASE is well known to all classical scholars in America as truly one of themselves, — accurate, thorough, and most enthusiastic. While tutor at Harvard, many years ago, he brought together in a very pleasing form the various portions of Cicero's writings which treat of immortality. More recently, as professor in Pennsylvania, he has edited Horace and the *Æneid*. We have here, in a form which has already proved very popular, the whole of those three books of Livy which are most commonly read in our colleges, followed by extracts from others.

In his Preface, Professor Chase has explained his principles of textual construction, and of Latin orthography. His chief guides are very properly Madvig and Gronovius. We confess *Gronov* and *Vergil* — in writing English — savor to us of intense affectation. He has, however,